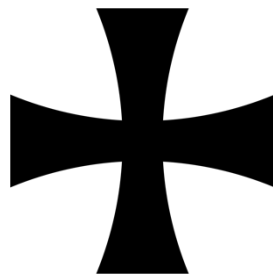


OUR JOURNEY TO GOD

SEARCH 185 PODCAST



Welcome to Search 185 where we discuss some of life's most important questions. Today we will be talking about the subject of relationships.

“Why do I need to have a relationship with God and others? And what are some of the obstacles to connecting with God?”

Henry, Why don't you get us started on that journey to God this afternoon . . .

Today's topic hits at the heart of who we are and what we desire in our hearts.

- Those watching or listening today may feel like they are stuck in life and are not going anywhere.
- Some will feel like something is missing in their lives . . . others will ask, “Is this all there is?” They will say, “**I WANT MORE.**” This “more” that we are looking for is the fulfillment of a life filled with **DEEP, MEANINGFUL** relationships.

Let me give you an example . . . (share witness of meeting my wife . . .)

But why are many of us not connecting with others to create these types of relationships?

THE MESSAGE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Our faith is that which calls every one of us to make a choice . . . will I choose life (God) or will I choose death (the world)?

- *Ours is the great story of how God created each one of us out of love and for love.*
- *But then we were enslaved through sin through disobedience by listening to the lies of the enemy and letting trust in our Creator die in our hearts.*
- *The Lord who loves us came to the rescue in Jesus Christ, “God became man, so that man could become God.” He came to elevate us to a higher dignity and calling, made clean and new.*
- *The only question left to answer is, ‘How will I respond?’ The goal is to become fully human, living out our God-given purpose so that we and others can have the fullness of peace and happiness our hearts have always been longing for!*

IN THE BEGINNING . . .

Relationship is at the heart of understanding God and our connection to him and to one another. It is at the core of filling that void in our heart that yearns for union and communion. That is why Genesis, “the beginning” is so full of insight into this notion of relationship

This is what the Word of God says about relationship . . .

- “It is not good for man to be alone . . .” (**Gen 2:18**) God creates the animals for Adam, but he still felt alone. Then God creates Eve. (v 23) “Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh!”
- Like any relationship, it can be nurtured and made to grow OR it can be ignored and it can wither and die. There is no middle ground. It is either growing or it is dying.
- To nurture and grow a relationship with another, it must contain the following items:
 - Attention (communication (transactional), conversation (personal), presence)
 - Love (selfless gift of self for the good of the other, communion and affection)
 - Service (doing your duty in the position that you are in)
- In the beginning . . . we see in the book of Genesis that the relationship between God and his creation (Adam and Eve) exhibited these qualities
 - ATTENTION: God and Adam spoke to one another (**Gen 2:16** – “You may freely eat . . .”; **CREATION OF THE ANIMALS** for Adam to name) He was **PRESENT** with them (**Gen 3:8** God walking in the garden)
 - LOVE: God gave of Himself by **BREATHING** into Adam’s nostrils to give him life-giving love (**Gen 2:7**). Adam and Eve had a love such that “the **TWO BECAME ONE FLESH.**” **Gen 2:24**
 - SERVICE: **GOD PROVIDED** Adam and Eve with a home and sustained them in every way. Adam had a duty to **TILL THE GARDEN AND PROTECT** it.

As I understand it, there are different types of “love” when we talk about relationships. Can you expand on that?

You and I were created for **RELATIONSHIP** . . . A deep, intimate connection. We’re going to focus on 3 types of relationships:

- Philia (Brotherly love)

- Eros (Erotic love)
- Agape (Unconditional love)

PHILIA

Comes from a the Greek word “philos” that means “brother.” This is the kind of love we have for deep friendships. It involves trust and forms bonds of mutual respect and care for one another and form life-long **FRIENDSHIPS**. (e.g. military, sports, fraternities, etc.)

EROS

Eros is the Greek word from which we get the word “erotic.” From the Christian perspective, it is NOT the eros of pornography or unbridled sexual desire. It is passionate, yes, but romantic. It involves attraction and longing for union with that special someone that leads to a life-long commitment **IN MARRIAGE**. It involves love of beauty and deep spiritual connections.

AGAPE

Agape love is **COMPLETE GIFT OF SELF** in an unconditional way . . . up to and including giving your live for the other. This is the kind of love you see on the crucifix. Jesus paid a price with his life that he did not deserve.

So would you say that this is why God created us, because of His unconditional love for us?

God created the human race out of love so as to have us **SHARE IN HIS DIVINITY** . . .

- “Let us make man in our image and likeness (**Gen 1:26, 27**)
- To be “made in the image and likeness” of someone means you are a child (son/daughter). This is God’s way of saying that we are his children.
 - **Gen 5:3** When Adam had lived a hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.
- We see in the NT, Peter tells us that through Jesus, we “become partakers of the divine nature” in **2 Pt 1:4**

We were created to work . . .

- Adam was commissioned by God to till and “keep” the garden. The word “keep” (Heb. *shamar*) has a secondary meaning “to guard.” (**Gen 2:15**)

We were created to be **OBEDIENT** to God . . . this is the crux of the beginning of our problems . . .

- You shall not eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (*Gen 2:17*)
 - The tree of the knowledge of good and evil represents the power to decide what is good and evil . . . Who decides what is good and what is evil, God or man?

1 Samuel 15:22 And Samuel said, “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, **TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE**, and to listen than the fat of rams.
- The **SIN OF DISOBEDIENCE** enters through man’s use of free-will, which was given as gift from God.
 - As a result, **SUFFERING** enters into the human world and ultimately, death.
 - *Gen 3:19* “you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”
 - This suffering due to **SIN** and **UNFAITHFULNESS** is manifested best as a form of spiritual death and exile that we see time, and time again in the OT.
 - When we are *disobedient to the way that we were made*, **WE CREATE FRACTURES** in our lives . . . **WE ARE BROKEN**.
 - The wages of sin is death (*Rom 6:23*)

Note: We were created by God for GOOD. **AUTHENTIC FREEDOM** is the ability to choose the good and avoid evil. To choose to live as we were created to live – in giving of ourselves for others, or authentic love.

So if we were created by God to love Him by obeying his commands, what does this OBEDIENCE to God’s commands look like?

- **Holiness of mind, body and soul**
 - *Peter 1:15-16* but as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”
- **Trust** God in ALL your circumstances. If you are living a life of holiness in conformity with what is True, Good and Beautiful, then all your circumstances are part of God’s divine will for you, even the suffering you encounter.
 - *Ps 112: 6-8* For the righteous will never be moved . . . He is not afraid of evil tidings; his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord. His heart is steady, he will not be afraid

- **Worship** God and Him alone. Give God the Love and Glory that is due to Him in the proper form of worship that He has revealed through the Apostles.
 - *Hebrews 12:28* Let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe
- **Love** one another
 - *John 13:34* A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

Being obedient is difficult. How can we ever achieve the obedience that God demands of us?

Story of the Rich Man . . . “then **WHO CAN BE SAVED?**”

Mark 10:27 Jesus looked at them and said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.”

We go back to the **BEGINNING** . . . It starts out with a promise . . .

THE PROMISE OF REDEMPTION

God’s Promise of a Redeemer

God **HAS NOT ABANDONED HIS PEOPLE** nor those that trust in him. Although Satan deceived Adam and Eve into not trusting the Lord, God’s plan for communion with man, will not be thwarted. The Messiah will come to deliver us, to redeem us . . . (*Gen 3:15*)

*“I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your seed and her seed;
he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”*

Redemption is to “purchase back,” to “buy back.” The devil “owned” us because of Original Sin, our fallen human nature. Our fate was condemnation . . . God’s solution was redemption. But . . .

It was not enough just to redeem us, we **NEEDED SOMETHING MORE** . . . we needed a transformation. We were “by nature, children of wrath”(*Eph 2:3*) born into a fallen and disgraced human nature. What we need is a renewed nature . . . that of Jesus Christ.

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

From the beginning of our creation, God desires to live in our hearts, not in the **ARK OF THE COVENANT** nor in the **HOLY OF HOLIES** of the Temple. The Law was written on stone tablets in Moses' time, signifying the condition of the people's hearts – cold and hard.

Jer 31:33 But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Ez 36:25-27 I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all you uncleanness . . . a new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.

You may try to be a better person, a better husband, a better father and **SUCCEED FOR A SHORT WHILE ON YOUR OWN ABILITIES** and strength through counselling and other means . . . BUT eventually you are going to fail. It is only through the **SPIRIT OF GOD** dwelling within you that you will be able to **TRANSFORM** and maintain a way of life that is worthy of God's expectations. There is no other lasting solution.

It seems like our Journey to God begins with this redemption of mankind by Jesus the Messiah. How did that redemption come to pass, what did it take to redeem us?

THE PRICE OF REDEPTION

In order for the human race to be “purchased back” from the clutches of death, a **SIN OFFERING HAD TO BE MADE**. In the OT covenant, in order to cleanse man of his sin, another (the animal) had to take on the punishment due to sin – death.

This animal sacrifice was the **PREFIGUREMENT, A SIGN**, if you will, of the sacrifice of the Messiah, who would be our **FINAL AND SUFFICIENT SUBSTITUTION** for the penalty we deserved – eternal punishment in hell.

Here is the basic principle of **REDEMPTION**:

1. Sin (disobedience) entered through man and so man must redeem the human race.
2. Sin is an infinite offence against God, therefore, only an infinite sacrifice suffices.

3. Man cannot offer an infinite sacrifice, only God can, so God becomes man . . .

Rom 5:18-19 Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous.

What was that obedience to God? To offer himself on our behalf.

Heb 9:24-26 For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands . . . but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf . . . But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

You know, Henry, we should be asking ourselves:
Do I realize what my salvation cost? An innocent man paid for the debt that I owed.
How should we respond to that gift of salvation through the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ?

THE UNIVERSAL CALL TO HOLINESS

Heb 12:14 *Strive for peace with all men, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.*

What is Holiness? Holiness is living according to how we are created. God created us for himself out of love for us. We were made for love – to love and to be loved.

HOW TO WE GET THERE? THE JOURNEY TO HOLINESS

If we are to obtain our inheritance, we must live a life worthy of being called “a child of God,” and a Christian. We must . . .

ACKNOWLEDGE WE ARE SINNERS AND REPENT

Lk 24:46-47 “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations

Act 2:38 Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

ACCEPT GOD'S SALVATION THROUGH THE GRACE OF JESUS CHRIST

Eph 2:5 “By *grace* you have been saved.”

Rom 3:24 “and are justified by his *grace* as a gift through redemption...”

Jn 15:5 “Apart from me, you can do nothing.”

BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST DIED TO FREE US FROM SIN

Acts 16:31 Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household.

John 20:31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS

Mt 19:16–17 Then someone came to him and said, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” And he said to him, “. . . If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.”

LEAD A LIFE OF PRAYER

Rom 12:12 Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

Ephesians 6:18 Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

1 Jn 4:20–21 If any one says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

PARTAKE OF THE SACRAMENTS OF BAPTISM, EUCHARIST AND CONFESSION

Mk 16:16 “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved”

Jn 6:53–54 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

1 Jn 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

ABANDON OURSELVES TO GOD’S DIVINE WILL

Henry, people may get to a point where they say, “I want to do God’s will, but I don’t know what His will is for my life. How can I know God’s will?”

The most common form of **RELATIONSHIP** with God that is sought after is one of having a **PERSONAL EXPERIENCE** with Him. However, there are real problems that are sometimes associated with the wonderful feelings of a powerful and personal religious experience.

- Often, the **EMOTIONAL ASPECTS FADE**, giving way to a series of difficulties, trials and temptations that **CHALLENGE THE FAITH AND DIMINISH THE GOOD EXPERIENCE** one has had.
- Quote from Jean-Pierre De Caussade in his book *Self Abandonment to Divine Providence*: “The **SOUL THAT DOES NOT ATTACH ITSELF SOLELY TO THE WILL OF GOD** will find neither satisfaction nor holiness in any other means however excellent by which it may attempt to gain them. If that which God Himself chooses for you does not content you, from whom do you expect to obtain what you desire?”¹

If you say, “I want to do God’s will, but I don’t know what His will is for my life. How can I know God’s will?”

- We must put all speculation aside and, with child-like willingness, **ACCEPT ALL THAT GOD PRESENTS TO US IN OUR DAILY LIVES**. What

¹ J. P. De Caussade, *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, ed. J. Ramiere, trans. E. J. Strickland, Third English Edition (Exeter; St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Company; The Catholic Records Press, 1921), 10.

God arranges for us to experience at each moment of our lives is the best and holiest thing that could happen to us.

The **first step** in doing God's will requires detachment from all created things.

- Christian detachment is not simply being cut off from things and people in a negative way. Instead, it **IS LEARNING TO LOVE ALL THINGS PROPERLY** and not in a distorted priority. This is also called, "dying to self."

The **second step** is to **ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOU WILL EXPERIENCE TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS**.

- Expect to be misunderstood by others who are pursuing holiness.
- When we truly abandon ourselves to God, there is a "death to self" which can be distressing, confusing and humiliating.
- This path to complete abandonment to God is simple, but not easy. It is necessary for our growth in holiness and love of God and neighbor.

Third step is to be assured of **GOD'S GREAT HELP IN THIS PROCESS**.

- God's love is measured out in proportion to our abandonment to that love.
- The more we **YIELD TO HIS LOVE**, the more we know His love. The more we abandon ourselves to God's will, the more He guides us unfailingly and provides for our needs.
- The phrase we must recall continually is, "**THY WILL BE DONE**." This has to become our way of life. But we are not done yet . . .

You mean to tell me that there is more after I have yielded my entire self to God . . . ?

THE GREAT COMMISSION

Yean, the Word of God tells us it is not good enough to have faith without love of God and neighbor.

- St. Paul tells us, "if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."²

WE MUST SHARE THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION WITH OTHERS

just like Christ commissioned his Apostles to evangelize the world:

Mt 28:19-20 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you

² [*The Holy Bible*](#), Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 1 Cor 13:2.

We begin our evangelization with . . .

- Ourselves (holiness of life, knowledge of God and His Word)
- Our spouse (if applicable)
- Our children (if applicable)
- Our immediate family
- Our faith community
- Our community in general
- Our county, state and nation
- The world

Most of us are not called to go beyond our own community, but our community should be the minimum. The Lord has made us “Christians,” which means “little Christs.” We must be the **LIGHT SHINING IN THE DARKNESS** that brings the good news of salvation to all we meet.

“You are the light of the world.”
Mt 5:14